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Amendments to the Claims:

1. (Currently amended) A method for controlling the operation of devices ~~(61,62,63)~~ of a hydrocarbon production system, comprising the steps of:

(a) connecting at least one remote master controller ~~(101)~~ to at least two central controllers ~~(100)~~ via a command/signal bus ~~(120)~~ and connecting the at least two central controllers ~~(100)~~ to at least one local controller via a common data bus ~~(130)~~, the central controllers ~~(100)~~ being reprogrammable and ~~the at least one local controller(s)~~ being configured to locally control the operation of at least one respective device ~~(61,62,63)~~;

(b) transmitting data between the central controllers ~~(100)~~ and ~~the at least one local controller(s)~~ via the common data bus ~~(130)~~ in response to said central controllers ~~(100)~~ receiving signals~~[[,]]~~;

(c) processing said transmitted data at ~~the within at least one local controller(s)~~; and

(d) transmitting data between ~~the at least one local controller(s)~~ and its ~~at least one associated device(s)~~ ~~(61,62,63)~~ according to the processed data so as to locally control the operation of ~~the at least one device(s)~~ ~~(61,62,63)~~.

2. (Currently amended) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein ~~method step (b) the step of transmitting data between the central controllers and at least one local controller includes transmitting data between the central~~

controllers {100} and the at least one local controller(s) in response to said central controllers {100} receiving signals from any other central controller, and/or or from the at least one local controller(s).

3. (Currently amended) The method as claimed in claim 1 ~~or 2~~, including the step of transmitting data between the at least one master controller(s) {101} and the central controllers {100} so as to remotely monitor the central controllers.

4. (Currently amended) The method as claimed in any preceding claim 1, including the steps of:

adding at least one device {64} and its at least one associated local controller(s) to the hydrocarbon production system[[],];

transmitting data between the at least one remote master controller(s) {101} and the central controllers {100}; and

reprogramming the central controllers {100} to enable at least one said newly added device(s) {64} and its at least one local controller(s) to be used in the method.

5. (Currently amended) The method as claimed in any preceding claim 1, including the steps of:

transmitting data between ~~the at least one~~ remote master controller(s) ~~(101)~~ and the central controllers ~~(100)~~; and

reprogramming the central controllers ~~(100)~~ to enable the central controllers ~~(100)~~ to control existing local controllers in a different manner.

6. (Currently amended) The method as claimed in any preceding claim 1, including the step of feeding back data signals from ~~the at least one~~ device(s) ~~(61, 62, 63)~~ to ~~the~~ at least one local controller(s).

7. (Currently amended) The method as claimed in any preceding claim 1, including the step of feeding back data signals from the at least one local controller(s) to the central controllers ~~(100)~~.

8. (Currently amended) The method as claimed in any preceding claim 1, wherein ~~method step (d) the step of~~ transmitting data between at least one local controller and at least one associated device includes controlling the at least one device(s) ~~(61, 62, 63)~~ by at least the steps of:

activating or powering a sensor ~~(62)~~ and/or or valve ~~(63)~~; and/or and

actuating a compressor, pump and/or or actuator ~~(61)~~.

9. (Currently amended) The method as claimed in any preceding claim 1, including the step steps of:

connecting the central controller (100) of one a subsea control module (50a) to one or more central controllers (100) contained in one or more other subsea control modules (50b) in the same or another a field development (170, 180) via the command/signal bus (120);

and

wherein method step (b) comprises transmitting data between any of the central controllers (100) and any of the local controllers contained in a retrievable module (49a, 49b) or a tree (30') of the same field development (170) via the common data bus (130).

10. (Currently amended) A system for controlling the operation of devices (61, 62, 63) of a hydrocarbon production system, comprising:

(a) connecting means (130) for connecting at least two central controllers (100) to at least one local controller, the central controllers being reprogrammable and the local controller(s) being configured to locally control the operation of at least one respective device (61, 62, 63), and control means (101) for remotely controlling the central controllers (100) and transmitting means (120) for transmitting data between the control means (101) and the central controllers (100), and transmitting means for data between said central controllers and said at least one

local controller in response to said central controllers receiving signals;

~~(b) transmitting means (130) for transmitting data between the central controllers (100) and the local controller(s) in response to said central controllers (100) receiving signals,~~

(b) control means for remotely controlling said central controllers;

(c) transmitting means for data between said control means and said central controllers;

~~(e) (d) processing means for processing said transmitted data at the said at least one local controller(s);~~

and

~~(d) (e) transmitting means for transmitting data between the said at least one local controller(s) and its at least one associated device(s) (61, 62, 63) according to the processed data so as to locally control the operation of the said at least one device(s);~~

wherein said central controllers are reprogrammable and at least one local controller is configured to locally control the operation of at least one respective device.

11. (Currently amended) The system as claimed in claim 10, including means (130) for feeding back data signals from the said at least one device(s) (61, 62, 63) to the said at least one local controller(s) and from the

said at least one local controller(s) to the said central controllers {100}.

12. (Currently amended) A computer program product comprising program code means stored in a computer readable medium for performing a method according to ~~any one of the method steps as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 9~~ claim 1 when ~~that~~ said product is run on a computer.